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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES

Situation of human rights in Nigeria

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In its resolution 51/109 of 12 December 1996, the General Assembly welcomed the exercise of my good offices with the Government of Nigeria, and requested that I undertake further discussion with the Government of Nigeria, in cooperation with the Commonwealth, on matters related to the purposes of the resolution. The General Assembly also requested that I report on progress in the implementation of the resolution, and on the possibilities for the international community to offer practical assistance to Nigeria to achieve the restoration of democratic rule and the full enjoyment of human rights in Nigeria.

2. In accordance with that resolution, discussions with the Government of Nigeria on matters related to the mandate of my good offices mission have continued at the highest levels. While the Government of Nigeria has approached those discussions in a positive spirit, a further response is still awaited to the recommendations of the fact-finding mission sent by my predecessor in March-April 1996.

3. In the light of the decisions taken at the recent meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of State and Government in Edinburgh, Scotland, from 24 to 27 October 1997, I shall be consulting again with the Government of Nigeria, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on ways in which the international community might offer practical assistance to Nigeria to achieve the full enjoyment of human rights in that country. In cooperation with the Commonwealth, and in consultation with the Government of Nigeria, I shall also be considering concrete ways in which the United Nations system can further assist Nigeria in ensuring the democratic

return to civilian rule by 1 October 1998, in accordance with the timetable previously established.

4. In pursuance of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/53 of 15 April 1997,[1] the Chairman of the Commission appointed on 24 June 1997, Mr. Tiyanjana Maluwa (Malawi) as Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Nigeria. Following the resignation, on personal grounds, of Mr. Maluwa on 12 August 1997, the Chairman of the Commission, after consultation with the members of the Bureau, appointed on 16 October 1997 Mr. Soli Jehangir Sorabjee (India) as Special Rapporteur (see, also, A/52/583).

5. The Special Rapporteur has been mandated to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session and to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fourth session, and to establish direct contacts with the authorities and the people of Nigeria. Consequently, and within the framework of the mandate conferred on him by the Commission, the Special Rapporteur, following his nomination, has initiated informal consultations with the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations Office at Geneva, with the objective of assessing the possibilities of undertaking an in situ fact-finding mission.

6. Based on the fact that the Special Rapporteur was only recently nominated and that the principle of an in situ mission appears to have every chance of materializing, the Special Rapporteur has decided not to submit an interim report on the situation of human rights in Nigeria to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. Instead, a full report on the implementation of Assembly resolution 51/109 and Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/53 will be submitted to the Commission at its fifty-fourth session. That report will be based, in the event that an in situ mission is acceptable to the Government of Nigeria, on the information and observations compiled directly by the Special Rapporteur during the proposed mission.

Notes

[1] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 3 (E/1997/23), chap. II, sect. A.